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Lake County communities may soon receive federal funding that would help alleviate some of the costs incurred from a snow storm earlier this month.

Gov. Rod Blagojevich on Tuesday declared eight counties disaster areas, following a blizzard on February 5 and 6 that dumped nearly 20 inches of snow in some parts, while closing schools and making commutes a nightmare. A similar declaration by President Bush would allow all communities in those counties to recoup 75 percent of all overtime costs incurred during snow removal.

Blagojevich's disaster declaration -- which includes Lake County -- does not offer any funding, but is a necessary step in getting a disaster declaration on the federal level, said Patti Thompson, a spokeswoman for the Illinois Emergency Management Agency.

To be eligible for a federal declaration, at least one community in the county must have experienced record, or near-record snowfall for a one-, two- or three-day period. In Lake County it was Antioch, which saw more than 19 inches of snow between Feb 5 and 6, just below its record of 21 inches.

It was very difficult storm for us to deal with," said Antioch's acting administrator Jim Keim. "Every employee was working 12-hour shifts to clear (the snow)."

Keim said he did not know exactly how much money was spent on that storm, but did say that the village is currently operating at 125 percent of its budget because increased snow removal.

Federal funding would cover 75 percent of all overtime hours on those two days, as well as assistance for plow operation. It could also include some money for salt use, Thompson said.

"I think it's very important (to receive funding) because this has been a hard winter, particularly for the northern part of the state," Thompson said.

Getting the funding is not guaranteed, but there is precedent for it. Following a storm on Dec. 1, 2006, more than two dozen Illinois counties received \$10.6 million in federal funding, Thompson said. Lake County was not among them.

The funding is supported by both Illinois senators as well a handful of congressmen. In a letter to Bush, Senators Dick Durbin and Barack Obama asked that Illinois communities be given aide.

"A harsh winter has exhausted the resources of many of the local governments affected by the most recent snow," said the letter, which was also signed by representatives Melissa Bean (D-Barrington) and Mark Kirk (R-Highland Park).